

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 17/13/92

Distr: UA/SC

4 August 1992

Further information on UA 118/92 (AFR 17/04/92, 8 April 1992) - Deaths in custody/Fear of further deaths

CAMEROON: Further deaths feared at Tcholliré prison camp

Amnesty International is concerned that further prisoners may die at Tcholliré prison camp in northern Cameroon unless they receive urgent medical treatment.

Recent reports indicate that up to 30 prisoners suffering from tuberculosis are in a critical state of health.

On 8 April 1992 Amnesty International expressed its concern that large numbers of common law prisoners, held on death row in one section of the camp known as Tcholliré II, had died as a result of malnutrition and medical neglect. Since December 1991 as many as 70 inmates were reported to have died. In response, the head of the prison service said in a public statement on 22 April 1992 that prisoners may have died in meningitis and cholera epidemics, but that there were no food shortages at Tcholliré prison. On 27 April 1992 the Minister for Territorial Administration (minister of interior) said that only six prisoners had died there in a recent epidemic of amoebic dysentery.

However, after the publication of Amnesty International's report, a local television station reportedly broadcast interviews with emaciated prisoners at Tcholliré II who confirmed that conditions were very harsh. The prison director, who was also interviewed, reportedly acknowledged that 17 or 18 prisoners had died as a result of tuberculosis and complained of difficult working conditions.

In May 1992 a delegation from the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (*Le Comité national des droits de l'homme et des libertés*), a human rights organization established by the government in June 1991, visited Tcholliré prison, apparently as part of a study on conditions in prisons and police cells. A report by the Commission, published in late June 1992 in the national press, observed that prisoners throughout Cameroon are kept in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, with an inadequate diet, no separate facilities for sick prisoners and frequent epidemics of scabies, tuberculosis and bronchitis. Some prisoners have been held in chains for periods of up to 15 years. According to the report, conditions at Tcholliré II are particularly harsh: over 130 prisoners under sentence of death are held in chains, day and night, unable to leave their cells for exercise or fresh air.

The Commission commented that the prison is isolated and families are unable to bring food supplies to the inmates as in other prisons. There is no medical care available: prisoners either recover without treatment or die. The Commission reported that 40 prisoners had died at Tcholliré II since May 1990,

17 of them of tuberculosis during the period between January and May 1992. The Commission also found that there were approximately 30 other prisoners in a critical condition.

Further details of conditions in Tcholliré prison can be found in Cameroon: Up to 70 deaths from malnutrition reported at prison camp, AI Index: AFR 17/05/92, 9 April 1992.

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FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters

- welcoming the investigation of conditions at Tcholliré II prison camp by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms in May 1992, but expressing concern at its findings that the conditions there are very harsh, accompanied by malnutrition and total medical neglect;

- expressing concern also at the Commission's report that some 30 prisoners at Tcholliré prison remain in a critical medical condition, and calling for them to be given urgent medical attention and an improved diet and living conditions or transferred to prisons where conditions are better;

- expressing concern that 130 prisoners are reported to be held in chains in their cells, unable to go out for exercise or fresh air, and observing that internationally recognized standards (the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules on the Treatment of Prisoners) provide that instruments of restraint, such as chains, shall not be applied continually and that every prisoner shall have at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily;

- appealing for an independent judicial inquiry into the deaths at Tcholliré II since mid-1990, with a view to assessing whether unlawful killings or other human rights violations have occurred and, if so, to bring those responsible to justice;

- calling on the government urgently to implement measures to improve prison conditions in Tcholliré II camp and other prisons in Cameroon where conditions are so harsh that they constitute a violation of human rights.

APPEALS TO:

1) President:
Son Excellence Monsieur Paul Biya
Président de la République
Palais de l'Unité
Yaoundé, Cameroon
Telegrams: President Biya, Yaounde, Cameroon
Fax: + 237 221699
Telex: 8207 PRESID KN
(Secretariat général)
8595 PRESID B KN
(Cabinet civil)
**Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République/
Dear President**

2) Minister of Internal Affairs:
Monsieur Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui
Ministre de l'Administration territoriale
Ministère de l'Administration territoriale
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon
Telegrams: Ministre Tsoungui, Yaounde, Cameroon
Telex: 8503 MINAT KN; 8268 MINAT KN
**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/
Dear Minister**

3) Minister of Justice:

Monsieur Douala Moutomé
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Moutome, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

M. Jacques-Roger Booh Booh
Ministre des Affaires étrangères
Ministère des Affaires étrangères
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Dr Solomon Nfor Gwei
National Commission for Human Rights
and Freedoms
Chamber of Agriculture
PO Box 287
Yaoundé, Cameroon

and the following newspapers:

Postwatch, PO Box 235, Bamenda, Cameroon
Cameroon Post, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon
Le Messager, BP 5925, Douala, Cameroon
Challenge Hebdo, BP 13088, Douala, Cameroon
La Nouvelle Expression, BP 5646, Douala, Cameroon

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 September 1992.